

Text: Various

Title: How to Read and Study the Bible

Truth: In order to follow Jesus, we have to know His word.

Date/Location: Sunday August 24, 2025 at FBC

Introduction

Today we have a privilege that God's people have mostly *not* enjoyed throughout world history. For the first 1600+ years from Adam and Eve until Noah, there were no written Scriptures at all. Similarly, for the next 1200+ years after the flood there still existed no written Scriptures. It was not until Moses that the first five books of the Bible became available on a very limited basis to the Lord's people. For the next nearly 1500 years, it was only a growing body of Old Testament books. Later, the Torah and portions of the Hebrew Bible would have been available in synagogues for occasional viewing and use.

Then a relative flurry of supernatural activity resulted in the production of the entire New Testament in about 65 years followed by diligent copying and distribution of the Word. But even then, it was not until after the printing press (1400 years later) that it became more widely available, and then only to churches or the wealthy.

In the early 1600s, for example, a KJV Bible would cost a significant sum of money for an ordinary working person (12 shillings out of 200 to 300 shillings annual income). This would be like several thousand dollars today. For less than 400 years of world history have we been able to affordably possess a copy of God's word and read it daily. Today it is very cheap, sometimes close to free in print or an online version. It has only been for the most recent 7% of world history that God's people have what you have—a Bible in your hand that you can carry to church and read daily. This is a blessing beyond the reach of most people who have ever lived.

I go back to Luke 12:48—"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

A corollary to this general truth is that we must take our stewardship of God's word seriously—to read it, remember it, study it, follow it.

I. Read and Remember the Word

- A. For some of us, I am preaching to the choir. For others, I am preaching to those who know they need to be in the choir! And for some, you do not yet realize the importance of being in the choir.
- B. In the church services we are to read God's word. In 1 Timothy 4:13 Paul enjoins Timothy to give attention to the reading. Connecting this with 1 Timothy 3:14 which tells Timothy how he must conduct himself in God's house (the church), we understand that Paul is talking about the public reading of Scripture. The other activities—exhortation and doctrine—support the interpretation of this as *public* reading. This implies that the pastor would do some private reading in preparation for the public reading.
- C. Literacy has been historically emphasized by God's people for the express purpose of teaching children how to read God's word. Since literacy is high, and the Bible is widely available, it is pretty easy to put two and two together and figure that God would have us use the learned skill of reading and apply it to the most important reading material in the world.
- D. After all, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Faith arises and is sourced in God's word. Whether the instrumental channel is hearing through someone else's reading and reporting, or through one's own reading and mulling it over does not make a substantial difference. For there to be faith, there has to be informational content to the faith. The Bible gives that content. God sees to it then that assent and trust is generated in the hearts of those who will be saved.
- E. The reading of the word, along with meaningful thought on it will generate some level of remembrance in people with a healthy brain. We can extend our memory by applying diligent thought to what we read, what it means, and how it applies.

For example, if we read "be angry and sin not" in Ephesians 4:26, we can reflect on:

1. How often do we become angry?
2. How often do we sin in the midst of that angry state?
3. How it is better to control ourselves so that we do not become angry in the first place.
4. How difficult that is to do especially if we have a pattern of it, how easy it is to excuse it in certain situations like home life or sin in the children or driving or yelling at the TV because of a dumb referee or a political issue.
5. How much do we yell or carry on in our anger so as to show our shame to those around us
6. How dangerous it is to *not* control our anger.

And then we might remember a verse like Proverbs 25:28 that says that the man who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls. He is spiritually unprotected, vulnerable to attack and failure.

This extra step of thinking helps us to remember what we read and to look for how God would have us to become more obedient day to day with our family and others around us.

F. Reading itself can be a relatively brief endeavor. Do not worry if you do not understand everything. Just read. Read consistently. Read larger amounts, at least one chapter but preferably a few chapters at a time. Take it in by listening if you like that method, but listen *actively*. Read sequentially through whole books and through all the books of Scripture. Do not just read randomly chosen portions. And yes, think about it. Take what seems significant to you at the time, or that which is emphasized in the text itself, and carry it with you through the day.

II. Study the Word

A. Another entire level beyond reading and thinking about the reading is in the *study* of the Bible. In study, you slow down, focusing on a smaller portion. It might be a chapter or a few paragraphs or even just a single paragraph or verse.

B. Start with your Bible, a pencil or pen, and a piece of empty paper or a notebook, and a quiet place. I often use an electronic piece of paper, so to speak (a word processor or note taking app). But other times I escape the world of digital distractions and go somewhere without any computer, phone, or tablet.

Until our generation, Bible study was accomplished with print Bibles, print reference materials like concordances, paper, pencil, and print commentaries. It still can be done that way while not being a complete Luddite!

C. Read the passage several times. Consider reading it in another translation or two. What translations, you ask? I use NKJV, ESV, NASB, LSB, and sometimes KJV, NIV, CSB, NET, and others. All these can provide helpful insight. Ponder what you are reading.

D. What do you use the paper for? To record thoughts as they come to you, for I suspect that you cannot keep everything in mind simultaneously! I would recommend you write down key words, questions you have about the text, main ideas, commands and prohibitions, reasons for something that is said, parallel Scripture passages you think of, and anything else.

One advantage of writing is that it helps you to learn and remember things, *even if you never look back at the thing you wrote.*

E. Following is an example. This is one way to diagram the text in blocks with indentation as well as to annotate it with questions, to add observations, to note key words, etc. There is a lot more that could be annotated, but this gives you a starting point and I would encourage you to try it sometime. Maybe you could write the text in one color, and your questions in another, and your observations in another.

F. One simple benefit of doing this kind of study is that it spares you another hour with the television or computer. It takes you away from the news and other far less profitable exercises. You will never say that you wish you studied Scripture less. Just be sure that sufficiently obey what you study so it is not a mere academic exercise.

2 Peter 1:1-8

1 (From) Peter — bondservant } of Christ
apostle

To ones who have obtained like prec. faith
w/ us

by ext, includes me

by righteousness of Christ

imputed?
attribute of His?

2 Grace + peace multiplied to you

where/how

in knowledge of God
+ of Jesus our Lord

3 as His divine power has given to us

?

it took that

comprehensive

all things that pertain to life and godliness

means of
giving all
things

through the knowledge of Him
who called us

knowledge again!

by glory
and virtue

meaning?

how connect? firm knowledge
 ↓
 4 by which great + precious promises have been given to us
 that through these
 you may be partakers of the divine nature,
 having escaped the corruption that is
 in the world through lust.
 a truth exceedingly ^{superlative} fill

5 But also for this very reason ← What's been given to us
 giving all diligence ← our manner

add to your faith
 virtue
 knowledge
 self-control
 perseverance
 godliness
 brotherly kindness
 love
 list structure indicates a building of one upon another, but I don't think strictly

6 Which need I work on right now?
 7

Why? ← Reason

8 For if these things are yours and abundant,
 you will be [fruitful] neither barren nor unfruitful
 in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus.
 I know! see again!

III. Follow the Word

- A. Reading, memorizing, and studying the Bible are all well and good, but if you do not spend most of your life *obeying* it, then it is all for nought.
- B. Jesus teaches us to *obey* His word (Matt. 28:20).
- C. James tells us to be *doers*, not hearers only (James 1:22-27). To *become* a Christian, you do not *do*...you trust in Jesus. But to *be* a Christian it is only consistent to follow the Lord and His word. He adds similar words in 2:14-26.
- D. Jesus says that the wise person is the one who hears what He teaches and *does* it. This one will be strong and immovable in the time of storm (Matt. 7:24-27).
- E. Ezekiel records God explaining that the people come to the prophet and hear what he says, but they do not listen to his words and *do not do them*. They say they will follow, but instead they pursue their own things (Ezek. 33:30-33).
- F. John 13:17 – “If you know these things, blessed are you if you *do* them.”
- G. One reason you are blessed is that *doing the will of God* gives proof that you are in God’s family (Matt. 12:50).
- H. John again: the way we know that we have come to know Jesus is if we *keep* His commandments (1 John 2:3-6).
- I. A sign of our love for the Lord is that we will *keep* His commandments (John 14:15).
- J. We learn the same truth about how essential it is to obey God’s word in the parable Matthew 21:28-31. Dad asks the first son to work for him. He refuses to go and serve the father, but later he regrets it and goes. The second son says he will go but does not. Which of these sons are you like? All of us start out life disobedient to God. But some of us have come to regret that and turn to God and demonstrate that heart of faith by obedience.

In our own personal reading, consider some other sections: Psalm 119:1-3, Deut. 11:26-28, Rom. 2:13, Phil. 4:9, 1 Tim. 4:15-16, Rev. 1:3, Prov. 8:32-34, John 15:10, 1 John 5:3.

Conclusion

Finally, consider Joshua 1:8. “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may *observe to do* according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

To do, you must observe. You have to read, hear, listen, remember, and study. There is great profit in every minute you spend in honest study of the Scripture.

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